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ABSTRACT

An examination of audience analysis factors in representative communication textbooks indicates that current pedagogical applications are broadly categorized into demographic and dispositional properties. The adaptation of constructivist theory to audience analysis can give speech students reasons why the speaker-audience relationship is as it is. To develop a conceptual framework for understanding the speaker-audience relationship, 12 corollaries (based on George A. Kelly's theory of constructive alternativism) should be considered: (1) the ultimate success of a speech depends on the speaker's ability to anticipate audience response; (2) an audience member comes to the speech occasion with past knowledge of the speaker's topic; (3) as the audience listens to the speech and hears threads of information consistent with accumulated knowledge, its construction systems and meanings will fluctuate between agreement/disagreement and clarity/confusion; (4) members of the audience will not respond to a speaker and speech similarly; (5) as the speaker addresses an audience, he or she must attempt to imaginatively construct how the audience will interpret the message; (6) each audience member organizes his or her unique construct; (7) the range of convenience of a construct's applicability in explaining phenomena is dependent on a listener's experience and openness to change; (8) audience members will differentially respond to messages in part or whole; (9) the audience will successively employ a variety of incompatible interpretations; (10) a speaker's efforts ought to be directed toward increasing cognitive specificity for a content domain of the audience; (11) the audience member's possible influence by a message is dichotomous; and (12) the audience must choose between the two poles of their dichotomies according to their anticipations. (HOD)

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# AN ADAPTATION OF CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM AS THEORY FOR AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

From several representative textbooks the literature on audience analysis is reviewed and categorized into demographic variables and dispositional properties. Twelve corollaries are offered as a coherent theoretical framework from which to conceptualize the speaker-audience relationship from George A. Kelly's philosophy and theory of constructive alternativism. Several recommendations for applying the framework to classroom instruction are discussed.

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# AN ADAPTATION OF CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM AS THEORY FOR AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

The literature on audience analysis is enormous. The diversity of studies include those examining the nature of mass media audiences, the assessment of nonverbal behavioral effects, interpersonal behavioral/message analysis, message complexity in group communication and, of course, those focusing on the speaker-audience relationship in communication.[1] A cursory examination of representative essays from those noted reveal the paucity of any systematic basis for examining audiences. This is particularly true of those studies that describe the speaker's audience in a non-mediated format. Not too surprisingly, the lack of a consistent framework or theoretical structure also manifests itself in textbook treatments of audience analysis. My purpose in this essay is threefold: (1) to provide a synthesis of what we seem to know about audiences from a reading of representative textbooks, (2) to critique that assessment, and (3) to provide a theoretical structure for conceptualizing audience analysis from George A. Kelly's theory of constructive alternativism.[2]

While constructivist theory is being applied in a variety of substantive ways,[3] it has not been adapted to the processual nature of the speaker-audience relationship in public communication contexts. The reasons for providing such a philosophical/theoretical position seems sensible primarily because (1) we stress the need for becoming aware of our audiences before, during, and after the presentation of speeches, and (2) as the

subsequent review suggests, there does not seem to be much substance in the way of information about audience analysis that is teachable beyond obvious sorts of considerations relative to audience traits and demography. An adaptation of Kelly's corollaries to the area of audience analysis will provide a theoretical rationale which will redirect our conceptualization and teaching of audience analysis.

## A Review of Audience Analysis

To synthesize and review the status of our knowledge regarding audience analysis, I drew from several representative textbooks their assessments and pedagogical applications for public communication.[4] What is captured in these works is a dual sense of stagnation with respect to topics and advice and occasional creative insights regarding our understanding of what audience analysis means.

While there is considerable variety in audience characteristics that are considered pertinent, all textbooks call for a need to "analyze your audience." All texts in one way or another indicate "demographic" and "dispositional" considerations must be taken into account when gathering information necessary to analyze and subsequently adapt to an audience. All texts seem to be asking the speaker to gather knowledge about the audience (analyze it) as a precursor to audience adaptation and selection of alternative message strategies to be included in the actual design of the speech.

The acquisition of knowledge about audiences is seen as a critical dimension of audience analysis by the authors.

Clevenger (1968) asks two basic questions regarding the acquisition of information about audiences: "What is useful to know about an audience?" and "How do you use the information once it is in hand?"[5] He responds to his questions by saying, ". . . both questions are (largely) unanswerable."[6] However, there are some things we can know about an audience and some things for which we cannot have knowledge. Clevenger argues for a two-step sequence in analyzing an audience of which the first is to gather as much demographic information as possible. The second is to:

> . . . infer about the audience such matters as knowledge, temperament, attitudes, habits of thought, language preferences, . . . that will enter into their responses to communication. (Thus) the demographic characteristics are observed; (next) they are used as a basis for inference concerning matters related to the speaker, speech, and occasion.[7]

What we are asking the speaker to do is engage in an inferential-leap from observation of demographics to knowledge about how those demographics have the potential for influencing audience attitudes, beliefs, temperaments and values. The notion of inferential-leap consistently appears in one form or another throughout treatments of audience analysis. Since it is of a special nature it will be treated as outside the domain of this theoretical adaptation.[8]

For purposes of our discussion, Clevenger suggests the inferential-leap is made of "ruminative, creative, relatively unsystematic sort(s) of mental activity rather than a rigorous

application of principle."[9] In other words, Clevenger suggests a relativistic position whereby the application of demographic analyses varies with the speaker, speech, and occasion. One important question seems to result from Clevenger's position: How is it possible to have complete knowledge of an audience? The answer is obviously that a speaker cannot have knowledge of all audience characteristics and demographics and, more importantly, to have the whole demographic picture in mind to begin is unnecessary. To deal in part with this dilemma, Clevenger offers two additional considerations that help narrow the range of necessary knowledge about an audience:

> (a) what about the audience is most likely to be important in light of the speaker's purpose? and (b) the search for information about the audience is then governed by what it is that the speaker needs to know about his audience in the context of a given communication situation.[10]

In other words, to understand the complexity and nature of the context in which a speech is to be given will dictate the sorts of things a speaker needs to know about his/her audience. Moreover, those dictates must be cushioned by the purpose of the speech. Cronkhite (1969) suggests audience analysis leads to adaptive rhetorical choices based on audience predispositions:

> . . . it is difficult to draw any clear line between material which belongs in a chapter on audience analysis

> and that which belongs in a chapter having to do with the choice a persuader must make in preparing a persuasive message, for those choices depend upon the characteristics of the audience the persuader faces.[11]

Cronkhite continues by offering personality traits, sex, age, intelligence, and prior attitudes and beliefs as demographics deserving recognition by the speaker.[12] In addition, his advice to speakers regarding available choices in message structure revolves around a seven-point list:

1. Selecting sources to be used in a message.
2. Selecting the motivational concepts.
3. Demonstrating the relationships.
4. Organizing material within communication.
5. Deciding upon a time of presentation.
6. Selecting the language to be used.
7. Selecting a style of delivery if the message is to be presented orally.[13]

Note the assumption behind this list: the speaker must have already inferred the connection between speech purpose and speech situation or context. In a later text, Cronkhite attempts to give form and substance to audience analysis with a little conceptual coherency.[14] His MYLAR model of audience analysis (Myself-Yourself Limited Access Reciprocity) combines in an eclectically confusing way (1) the speaker-oriented approach to audience analysis, (2) the advent of communication understood as dialogue from Buber's perspective, (3) a reconciliation of

dialogue with public speaking, (4) Stewart's transactional model of communication, (5) the JoHari self-disclosure model, and (6) transactional analysis. The effort to build a model of audience analysis is admirable but confusing. The basic question remains: To where do we return for knowledge of the audience? In Cronkhite's case: to "personal characteristics" such as age, sex, culture, race, formal education, and socio-economic status.[15]

Verderber (1979) defines audience analysis as "a method of examining audience knowledge, interests, and attitudes to determine a set of criteria by which you can test the appropriateness of the selected topic and the specific purpose."[16] In addition, he suggests we need to know about age, sex, occupation, income, race, religion, nationality, geographic uniqueness, and group affiliation.[17] Verderber also contends, "The procedure requires that you gather as much data about the audience as you possibly can, and then use the data in making judgments about knowledge, interests, and attitudes.[18]

Colburn and Weinberg (1981) suggest a "circular response" exists between speaker and audience that is mediated by answers to three basic questions: (1) What are the demographic characteristics of the listening group? (2) What are the perceived norms that characterize the listening group? and (3) How important are the perceived norms to those within the listening group?[19] They suggest that it is important to answer all three questions if "we are to predict the likelihood of individual audience members listening to what transpires in a given speaker-audience situation."[20]

Emmert and Donaghy (1981) claim necessary knowledge of demographics and then contend "we have to assume certain things about audiences before we talk to them in order to structure a message consistent with their needs, values, and prior attitudes."[21] In addition, they suggest the better we can predict the response of the audience, the less likely we are to encounter problems with the audience.[22]

Jabusch and Littlejohn (1981) collapse demographics with Bitzer's notions regarding situational constraints and Boulding's notions about image, traditions, and current events and an understanding of the physical setting with selecting and focusing the topic of the speech.[23] Audience analysis, for Jabusch and Littlejohn, revolves around an assessment of demographics plus "any audience variables that are specific to your topic."[24] How we arrive at our knowledge of audiences is problematic.

Nelson and Pearson (1981) detail "informal" and "formal" ways of assessing audience demographics and such things as values, attitudes, and beliefs. A speaker can acquire information by eyeballing the audience to see what can be seen (informal) and the speaker can construct survey questionnaires to assess audience predispositions (formal) toward the topic, speech, and occasion.[25] In an attempt to give form to the inferential-leap, Nelson and Pearson advocate a combination of acquiring information about audiences in formal and informal ways.[26]

Ehninger, et al. (1982) ask "What kinds of generalizations about the backgrounds and personalities of audiences are warranted?"[27] Their answer is to read two sorts of cues: The readily observable aspects of people and psychological inferences

about general beliefs, attitudes, and values. In addition to discerning audience demographics and general beliefs, attitudes and values, the authors tie their discussion of audience analysis into the speaker, subject, purpose of the speech, occasion, prevailing rules or customs, and the physical conditions under which the speech is to occur.[28] While current research regarding speaker-audience relations is briefly discussed, the nature of the leap from knowledge of demographics to audience traits and dispositions is unclear. To be sure, our knowledge of audience analysis and adaptation is muddled and thus appears to be inordinately complex. In order to help clarify I have specified in table form the audience analysis factors that are treated by representative texts in the discipline (see Table 1).

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Insert Table 1 here

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By examining the table several trends are evident. First, our knowledge of factors included in audience analysis falls conveniently into two rather broadly conceived categories: demographic factors and "dispositional" factors including personality traits, sex, age, audience predisposition in terms of needs, values, attitudes, and beliefs, structural message choices for the speaker and the context in which the speech occurs. Second, there are fifteen demographic factors and eight dispositional factors that appear with varying frequency and depth of discussion. Third, sex and age of audience appears both as demographic variables and in the dispositional category.

Supposedly, sex and age can be conceptualized into both categories because, on the one hand, they are demographic considerations and, on the other hand, they could be conceptualized as "not demographic" and hence included with such factors as personality traits, intelliegence, needs, values, attitudes and beliefs. The absence of a clear theoretical rationale for placement in one category or another yields conceptual confusion. Fourth, the "context" or situation in which the speech occurs is the only factor unanimously represented in all discussions of audience analysis and adaptation. Fifth, age, sex, socio-economic level (income), and level of education are the most frequently mentioned demographic factors. Sixth, prior needs, values, attitudes, and beliefs of the audience are the most frequently mentioned factors in the dispositional category. It is important to note that while the "x's" in Table 1 indicate occurrences of discussion across representative texts, they do not indicate the substantiveness of each text's discussion of each variable. The amount and nature of information about each factor varies considerably from one author to the next. Obviously some factors are more important to some authors than others, though no reasons are given as to why some are included and others are not.

What follows is a theoretical adaptation of constructivist theory to audience analysis. While this theoretical stance does not give the student/practitioner specific and pragmatic ways to choose alternative message strategies or engage the requisite inferential-leap, it will give the student <u>reasons why</u> the speaker-audience relationship is as it is. Thus, the knowledge

we have acquired thus far is overlaid with a theoretical position which will form bases on which to consider the dynamics of speaker-audience relations.

## A Constructivist Approach for Audience Analysis

In our classes we tell students of the need and importance for analyzing an audience before, during, and after a speech in terms of the purpose and occasion. Depending on which textbook we choose, we counsel the student to ascertain demographics and audience beliefs and values either inferentially or from questionnaires and surveys of different types. Once the audience is "analyzed" the student may ask: "How can I be sure that my speech is appropriately designed?" "Well," we say, "let's try it and see." While there is a point at which a speech needs testing in front of an audience, there is considerable guesswork in the planning stages relative to audience analysis. A major reason for the guesswork is the result of little or no explanation of "why" certain demographics or audience member traits and states should be used. If you will, we lack a way in which the speaker-audience relationship can be conceptualized. The following section outlines several corollaries for such a conceptualization. The purpose is not to denigrate knowledge we have acquired thus far but to offer a philosophical/theoretical framework useful for utilizing that knowledge in assessing audiences.

The constructivist approach to human communication has been articulated in substantive ways elsewhere so I will restate, in summary format, only what will provide us with a backdrop for the corollaries that follow.[29]

Utilizing a constructivist approach for audience analysis emphasizes the creation and reciprocal nature of emergent meaning as a joint product between speaker and audience. More importantly, the production of shared meaning in a reciprocal/processual sense is prompted by "a socially shared code for the expression of thought . . . and the individual and interpretive and behavioral processes . . . by which strategies are enacted and expressed meanings are translated into subjective understandings" by members of an audience.[30] Specifically, what we ask persons about to engage in the analysis of an audience is a generalized form of role-taking or the process by which we imaginatively construct, in an anticipatory way, what it is the audience may think of a message. A constructivist approach to social interaction has thus far focused primarily on interpersonal/dyadic interaction. The fundamental premises of such a position can be expanded to the domain of public communication.

A constructivist approach to audience analysis would begin from two conceptual vantage points. First, there is an interplay of shared and individual interpretive processes by which "individuals define situations and construe the perspectives of others within them in making the anticipations necessary for joint conduct and the coordinated creation of shared meaning."[31] Second, to "adapt" to an audience after whatever "analytical" means are available is to construe an audience's potential interpretations of the speech. Thus, the speaker and audience are not conceptualized as separate entities existing together during the time a speech is given. Rather, the relationship is to be thought of as a large interactive dyad (made of many more than two people) where

a speaker anticipates the audience's response to his/her intended actions and beliefs which, in turn, serve to maximize and modulate the potential for the speaker's message to influence the audience. Thus, we have the basis for an emergent and reciprocal process whereby meaning is created in joint fashion between speaker and audience.

The corollaries that follow are intended to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the speaker-audience relationship. More importantly, the constructivist position relies on an organismic metaphor; in other words, they are not to be read as individual, discrete items. Rather, they are to be interpreted as participants in an organic whole. As such they place our understanding of speaker-audience relations in processual, dynamic terms and specify the forces that act in a reciprocal way on the speaker and audience. The first and fundamental corollary is stated as follows:

I. <u>The audience's predisposition toward a speaker and message is influenced by the ways in which the speaker successfully anticipates the construct system of the audience.</u>

The speaker must not only begin the venture of speech preparation with the audience in mind, he/she must continually monitor the response of the audience as the speech progresses. The ultimate success of a speech depends on the speaker's ability to anticipate how the audience will respond to the message and the speaker. As the speech is being delivered the speaker must monitor audience response to the message in proactive terms so that extemporaneous adjustments can be made in message strategies while

the speech progresses.

II. An audience or audience member anticipates the potential of a message's influence by construing the repeatable properties of messages-in-context.

An audience member comes to the speech occasion with accumulated past knowledge of the speaker's topic. The constructivist position contends that it is on prior knowledge of the topic (global and/or specific, vicarious and/or direct) that the potential to influence arises. Influence, per se, is understood in persuasive and informative terms. Thus, any message has the potential to "influence" an auditor. The audience member will search through the speech to discover ideas, feelings, attitudes, and so on that have been accumulated through prior experience. These threads of shared knowledge between speaker and auditor prompt attention to the speech. In other words, it is these replicable properties that give rise to the potential influence a message may have. For example, say I deliver a speech on a pro-abortion topic to the general assembly of the National Organization of Women. The extent to which my speech succeeds depends on my ability as speaker to compare the unfamiliar with the familiar; the draw conceptual links between the general and the specific; to move the accumulated audience's knowledge of abortion in general terms to specifics; and to build a case for my proposition in favor of legalizing abortion with information that is developed from what may be termed common or "shared" knowledge.

III. An audience or audience member's construct system varies as it successively construes the replicable properties of the message from a speaker.

The speaker-audience relationship is best characterized as laden with dynamics that fundamentally reolve around a reciprocal construal of how the speaker's message is incorporated into an audience member's interpreations of the speech topic. In other words, as the auditor listens to the speech and hears threads of information consistent with accumulated knowledge, his/her construction system and meanings will fluctuate between agreement/disagreement and clarity/confusion. In line with the third corollary is a fourth that admits of an obvious sort of idea but one that nonetheless must be stated.

IV. Audiences and audience members differ from one another in their collective and individual abilities to construe the potential of a message as influential.

This is another way of saying that the entire audience will not respond to a speaker and speech in a similar way. While open to debate, presumably, the greater the number of persons influenced in similar ways by the speech suggests the speech has been adapted to that audience.

V. To the extent the speaker employs the individual and collective constructs of experience of the audience, we can say that the speaker participates in the shared and reciprocal constructions of experience of that audience.

To the extent a speaker construes the construction

processes of an audience, the speaker may be said to play a role in the process of maximizing a message's potential to be influential. In other words, as the speaker addresses an audience, he/she must attempt to imaginatively construct how the audience will interpret the message. There is no magical way to do this; the process of role-taking an audience's predispositions is, at best, a matrix of guesswork. Likewise, a message will not be as potentially influential for an audience if parts of it are not within the realm of the "already known." To build a speech not grounded in common and shared knowledge as a point of departure is to construct a message that has no foundation in an audience's individual and collective construction systems.

What has been outlined so far is a processual conceptualization of speaker-audience relationships from the standpoint of the dynamics of communication. We have a sense, at this point, of the reciprocal influence prompted by the overlap of speaker, topic, and occasion. Clearly, the focus of our attention for analyzing an audience should not be so much concerned with demographics as a matter of sole concern in audience analysis. Demographic analysis is important in the sens of capturing a static, non-dynamic view of an audience, We now have the beginnings of a framework for understanding audience analysis in processual and communication terms at a theoretical level. To further develop the organic whole between speaker and audience let us continue with more corollaries.

VI. The variation in the audience's processing of a message is limited by the permeability of their cognitive content domains relative to the topic of the speech.

This corollary concerns a message's potential to be influential and having certain constraints. Utilizing ideas from cognitive complexity theory we can advance the following argument.[32] Each audience member has cognitive content domains (cognitive schemas, maps, ideational composites) that are topic or idea specific. That is to say the obvious: we have developed over time and through experience differential ways of seeing and understanding our world. These ways are constructs or interpretations (meanings) we have for events, objects, persons, and ideas. Each audience member organizes their constructs into a system of sensibility that is specific for that person. The system is, in turn, divided into subsystems or content domains (i.e., domains with referents such as automobiles, women's rights, etc.). Constructs or meanings within content domains are arranged from global to specific in a hierarchical format that is known only to the individual. Thus, individual member's knowledge of any given speech topic can range from global (general and diffuse in nature) to specific (highly articulated and differentiated). For example, I have knowledge of automobiles--I have, if you will, a content domain containing meanings gathered over time and through experience that dictage what I think (feel and believe) about automobiles. I have general and specific meanings for automobiles in terms of design, aesthetics, and function. I do not, however, have as complete an understanding of automobiles as my garage mechanic. He is more cognitively "complex" than I

regarding automobiles; my knowledge is more diffuse and less well articulated than his. Both our content domains relative to automobiles contain some of the same meanings; however, his knowledge is more specific in terms of the multitude of ways he understands automobiles. Therefore, he has many more ways available to him for understanding the intricacies of automobile mechanics than I. Thus, a related corollary:

VII. The range of convenience for variance of an audience member's response to a message lies within the relative permeability of the content domain of the speaker's topic.

The range of convenience of a construct's applicability in explaining phenomena is dependent on a listener's experience and openness to change. The permeability of a content domain refers to its ability to accommodate new and/or different experience.[33] The lesser the permeability the more closed the content domain; the greater the permeability the more open the content domain to the potential for influence from a message. Range of convenience refers to a person's range of applicability each interpretive schema or content domain possesses. For example, if I were using the construct "soft-hard" I might well apply it to sofas and other real-world objects that have qualities of softness and hardness. It is, if you will, convenient for me to see those objects in terms of softness and hardness because of the construct soft-hard. On the other hand, I do not understand ideas in soft-hard ways. The construct soft-hard does not apply to me (it may for you); its range of convenience

is limited through application to the world of objects I have chosen them to explain. Thus, audience members will judge a speaker's ideas on the basis of convenience of application of interpretations which, in turn, is dictated by the relative openness of the content domain of the audience member. For example, if my content domain on women's rights contained traditional meanings for women as subservient, child-bearing, God-fearing, home-ridden creatures--the chances of me listening to a speech advocating pro-abortion to free married women for careers would be severely limited. My content domain is not permeable; it is closed. It is clearly not convenient for me to interpret your ideas in ways similar to mine.

More specifically, let us address the nature of application of interpretations and, therefore, the parameters on which a content domain's range of convenience emerges.

VIII. Each audience or audience member characteristically develops, for convenience in anticipating the influence of a message, a system of ordinal relationships between the speaker's topic and the member's construct content domain.

Each audience member's interpretation of a speaker's message will not be identical and, at the same time, the constructs each member holds do not exist independently of one another. Each audience member will develop an understanding of the message that is sensible for him/her. Thus, audience members will differentially respond to messages in part or whole. What is significant in this corollary is to understand the systemic

nature of content domains persons hold. Kelly argues that all of one's constructs are organized into a system which involves "a grouping of elements in which incompatibilities and inconsistencies have been minimized."[34] Thus, a person possesses the cognitive wherewithal to aid in avoiding contradictory applications of meanings they hold for any given content domain. The message for speakers addressing an audience is clear and cogent: Be assured audience members will interpret your speech in personally sensible ways that do not totally uproot the existing content domains prompted by listening to the message itself. One of the fundamental goals of the speaker, therefore, is to avoid introducing incompatibilities between or within content domains. This does not mean that all topics must be dealt with in a general and nonspecific fashion. Rather, it means the speaker needs to account for as many potential incompatibilities as is possible given the constraints of the topic and occasion. Next we are led to another related corollary that further specifies the parameters within which a speaker's attempt to influence an audience is explored.

IX. <u>An audience or audience member will successively employ a variety of interpretations of messages which are inferentially incompatible with each other.</u>

The constructivist perspective allows the speaker considerable freedom in terms of minimizing incompatibilities within or between content domains in the minds of the audience. Any change the speaker prompts in a construct system of an audience takes place within the larger framework of the audience member's

prior knowledge of an attitude toward the topic, speaker, and occasion. But the changes that take place need not involve--and the speaker need not presume--continuity such that meanings an audience members holds for a message were derived from those that existed yesterday. Indeed, new conditions and positions of advocated change can and should be considered desirable and fair game from the speaker's standpoint. The speaker ought not to assume an audience member will respond in predictable ways. At best the speaker can clarify content explain incompatibilities and therefore guide the audience member toward a conclusion the speaker wishes to make. For example, the speaker may well include a section in the design of her speech where she anticipates opposite arguments (presumably those held by the audience in general or global ways). Next, the speaker needs to suggest why those opposite arguments are weak, undesirable, or not worthy of our attention. Once the distance between the audience's construal of the topic has been collapsed with the speaker's purpose, incompatibilities have been somewhat diminished and the pathway is clearer for advocating a position. The process of structuring a speech to maximize audience adaptation is specified in the following corollary.

X. <u>The more global the knowledge of an audience or audience member the more specific, detailed, and well-developed the speaker's message must be</u>.

Following Werner's Orthogenetic Principle of social/cognitive development, knowledge proceeds from a position of globality and generality to ever-increasing conditions of

specificity.[35] Thus, a speaker's efforts ought to be directed toward increasing cognitive specificity for a content domain of the audience. For example, were I to give a speech on the desirability of choosing a Mazda, 4-door sedan over a Cadillac 4-door sedan, I first would have to assess comparisons between the two automobiles in a general fashion before I could make an argument advocating the choice for the Mazda. Therefore, I would be talking about general knowledge of (1) cars, followed by (2) a detailed discussion of the Mazda and Cadillacp which would be in turn followed by (3) specific and detailed reasons why Mazda is superior to Cadillac. Hence, an auditor would be guided from the general to the specific in the speaker's attempt to influence knowledge of comparisons between the two automobiles. The constructivist position holds that change in a person's interpretive schemas takes place as the person moves toward creating a more suitable system for anticipating events. An audience member's personal response to a message is further specified in the following corollary.

XI. An audience member's personal response to the potential of being influenced by a message is dichotomous in nature.

Kelly's epistemological position claims that to have knowledge of one thing (idea, feeling, object) we must have knowledge of its opposite. In other words, to have knowledge of "black" I must have knowledge of "non-black;" to have knowledge of "good" I must have knowledge of "bad;" to have knowledge of "cold" I must have knowledge of "hot." For Kelly, knowledge begins in global ways as a cichotomy and through direct and vicarious experience

we discern shades of grey, goodness, warmth, and so on. In other words, through accumulated experiences we become more specific in our ability to interpret and understand our world in a variety of ways. Therefore, if an audience's knowledge is global, the speaker should strive to increase the alternatives through which the audience member may interpret the message in specific ways by drawing upon the dichotomous nature of knowledge the audience possesses. For instance, if I had the goal of advocating pro-abortion, I may have to develop a case for women's rights and equality for all human beings before I argue for women's rights to make choices for themselves. In addition, I might well include examples of what it is like not to have freedom of choice, equality, and rights that are granted to others before I move to a position advocating abortion. Thus, I would be moving from general to specific presumably with examples and analogies that could be understood by the audience.

For all the attempts a speaker may make in altering an audience member's construction system (influencing the audience), the audience, too, has considerable freedom in rendering a response that is aligned with the speaker's purpose. Thus, the last corollary follows in line with the preceding discussion.

XII. An audience or audience member chooses the alternatives in the dichotomy through which he/she anticipates the greater possibility for extending and defining their construct system--either individually or collectively.

Drawing together elements discussed so far we can see that if a person's cognitive processes are dictated by ways in

which he/she anticipates events, and those ways present themselves in dichotomous form, it follows that the person must choose between the two poles of his/her dichotomies in a manner which is predicated by his/her anticipations. As Kelly argues, whenever a person makes a choice, it will tend to be in favor of the alternative which seems to provide the best basis for anticipating ensuing events.[36] For example, if my content domain was permeable enough to permit access to new information on abortion, I would choose to believe the speaker's position if it allowed me to extend an already existing content domain on abortion. Consequently, my interpretations for abortion would be widened to include the speaker's position of advocacy. The advice for a speaker in adapting to and analyzing his audience is to give good and substantive reasons for the alternative being advocated. The better the reasons the better the chance for solidifying an alternative the speaker wishes the audience member to adopt.

## Conclusion

This review of audience analysis indicates that current pedagogical applications are broadly categorized into demographic factors and dispositional properties such as attitudes, values, and personality traits. Using indirect, informal and formal means, students are advised to infer which rhetorical strategies would work best for a given audience. A constructivist framework for audience analysis was offered as a theoretical stance to be placed over existing literature in our research and textbooks. In so doing we have considered a conceptually coherent

position from which (a) the sudent may begin to understand the dynamics of the speaker-audience relationship and (b) further research queries may be made. Discussion of the twelve corollaries offers us a way to enter the task of developing a speech that conceptualizes the ongoing and processual nature of public communication. As such, a constructivist approach moves us away from the static analysis of demographics as a sole concern when analyzing an audience before and during a speech. In no way are demographics and audience predispositions to be discounted; the instructor is advised to select those textbooks that seem to capture the most desirable and workable list of items to be taught. Unfortunately, we have no better way available to us for analyzing audiences. There is a moment, in the development of a speech, that audience analysis must stop. I recommend using the best available means to make logical guesses about the individual and collective mind of the audience. One recommendation that seems to move us in a more substantive direction is to consider an audience not so much as a mass of humanity but rather to consider it as if you were talking to one other person. Also one might consider randomly sampling a portion of the audience and then cautiously generalizing to other members of the audience those dispositions the sample seems to hold. Caution is needed because of any audience member's predilection to construct meanings that are personally sensible for his/her existing ways of understanding the world. Thus, an additional bit of advice for instructors is to promote extemporaneous assessments of audiences while a speech is being delivered. Presumably, training in assessing nonverbal clues would strengthen a speaker's ability to

discern boredom, lack of comprehension, attitude/belief changes in directions opposite those intended and so on--though these factors have yet to be researched. It seems sensible to suggest that audience members should be treated as individuals rather than a mass of humaity with a monocular consciousness. From random selection of certain persons, predominant constructs may be cautiously generalized to the larger gathering. Any changes in audience predispositions should be viewed as individuals making changes in how they personally construe the topic being addressed by the speaker. Similarly, it should be remembered that audience members will vary in their personal capacity and willingness to be receptive to ideas that prompt change in their existing construction systems.

Constructivism explains how and why demographic variables and dispositional properties interact with the speaker, context, and topic of the speech. The foregoing corollaries provide, essentially, a rationale for making interpretive judgments about audience variables as they affect rhetorical strategies and choices. For some time the area of audience analysis and public communication has remained largely untouched while the field has moved toward understanding communication in processual and transactional ways. What has been attempted is to move this rather important area of our discipline more in line with current thinking about communication.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A composite scan of Psychological Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, and ERIC utilizing descriptors of "audience," "audience analysis," and various modes and contexts of communication through 1979, reveal 39,678 investigations of all types. Of these, 733 investigations focus directly on audiences and the effects of messages, persons, and contexts upon those audiences.

[2]See, in particular, George A. Kelly, The Psychology of Personal Constructs I, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1955), pp. 3-183; for extensions of his original work, see Donald Bannister and Fay Fransella, Inquiring Man: The Theory of Personal Constructs (Middlesex: Penquin Books, Ltd, 1971), Donald Bannister, ed., Perspectives in Personal Constructs Theory (London: Academic Press, 1970), Donald Bannister and J. M. M. Mair, eds., Personal Construct Psychology: Psychotherapy and Personality (New York: John Wiley, 1980).

[3]Contemporary applications of Kelly's ideas to communication can be seen in David L. Swanson and Jesse G. Delia, The Nature of Human Communication (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1976), Barbara J. O'Keefe and Jesse G. Delia, "Construct Comprehensiveness and Cognitive Complexity," Perceptual and Motor Skills, 46 (1978), 548-550; Barbara J. O'Keefe and Jesse G. Delia, "Construct Comprehensiveness and Cognitive Complexity as Predictors of the Number and Strategic Adaptation of Arguments and Appeals in a Persuasive Message,"

Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 231-240; Jesse G. Delia, Susan L. Kline, and Brant R. Burleson, "The Development of Persuasive Communication Strategies in Kindergartners Through Twelfth-Graders," Communication Monographs, 46 (1979), 241-256; Julie A. Burke, "The Relationship of Interpersonal Cognitive Development of the Adaptation of Persuasive Strategies in Adults," Central States Speech Association Convention, 1979; Daniel J. O'Keefe, "The Relationship of Attitudes and Behavior: A Constructivist Analysis," in The Message-Attitude-Behavior Relationship: Theory, Methodology, and Application, Donald P. Cushman and Robert D. McPhee, eds., (New York: Academic Press, 1980), pp. 117-148; and for contemporary application of the constructivist perspective to argumentation see George Ziegelmueller and Jack Rhodes, eds., Dimensions of Argument: Proceedings of the Second Summer Conference on Argumentation (Annandale: Speech Communication Association, 1981).

[4]In chronological order, the selections are: Theodore Clevenger, Jr., Audience Analysis (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966); Gary Cronkhite, Persuasion: Speech and Behavioral Change (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968); also reprinted in James W. Gibson, ed., A Reader in Speech Communication (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), pp. 243-279; Gary Cronkhite, Public Speaking and Critical Listening (Menlo Park: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing, 1978); Rudolph F. Verderber, The Challenge of Effective Speaking, 4th ed., (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1979); C. William Colburn and Sanford B. Weinberg, Listening and Audience Analysis 2nd ed., (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1981); Phillip Emmert and William C. Donaghy,

Human Communication: Elements and Contexts (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1981); David M. Jabusch and Stephen W. Littlejohn, Elements of Speech Communication: Achieving Competency (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981); Paul E. Nelson and Judy C. Pearson, Confidence in Public Speaking (Dubuque: William C. Brown Company, 1981; and Douglas Ehninger, Bruce E. Gronbeck, Ray E. McKerrow, and Alan H. Monroe, Principles and Types of Speech Communication 9th Ed., (Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1982).

[5]Clevenger, 1968, p. 43.

[6]Ibid., p. 43, parentheses mine

[7]Ibid., p. 43, parentheses mine

[8]The inferential-leap required of persons engaged in speech development is outside the domain of this theoretical adaptation. Since it is mentioned in one form or another by all authors in the review, it deserves some attention. It is clear that the ruminative and creative nature of the inferential-leap is left to the student to discover through trial and error. From experience, I believe inferences made about rhetorical strategies and speech development emerges in nonspecific and largely intangible ways. It seems as if our knowledge of audiences, once gathered, halts and then proceeds only when the speech is delivered to practice or intended audiences. In a very real sense, therefore, the speech we deliver succeeds or fails depending on the conceptual links we are able to draw as we move from observation of audiences to rhetorical message strategies.

The pedagogical implications of the status of our knowledge is clear. The nature of the ruminative process Clevenger and the others discuss is tied directly to the student's ability to think about and conceptualize the speaker-audience relationship before and during the inferential-leap from prior knowledge of audience to choice of rhetorical strategy. If a sense of what the relationship is like between the speaker and audience is missing, the movement through the inferential-leap falls more squarely into the realm of guesswork. At this juncture the inferential-leap remains almost mystical and problematic. The mystical nature of the leap might exist because of a lack of a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of speaker-audience relations. Or, it may simply exist as part of the process necessary in developing wise rhetorical strategies.

[9]Ibid., p. 44, parentheses mine

[10]Ibid., p. 45.

[11]Cronkhite, 1968, p. 129.

[12]Ibid., p. 130.

[13]Ibid., p. 172.

[14]Cronkhite, 1978, pp. 36-59

[15]Ibid., pp. 42, 43, 49.

[16]Verderber, 1979, p. 36.

[17]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[18]Ibid., p. 37.

[19]Colburn and Weinberg, 1981, pp. 22, 23.

[20]Ibid., p. 24.

[21]Emmert and Donaghy (1981), p. 329.

[22]Ibid., p. 161.

[23]Jabusch and Littlejohn, 1981, pp. 233-244.

[24]Ibid., p. 233.

[25]Nelson and Pearson, 1981, pp. 41-59.

[26]Ibid., p. 48.

[27]Ehninger, Gronbeck, McKerrow, and Monroe, 1982, p. 81.

[28]Ibid., pp. 86-94.

[29]The clearest explanation of the constructivist position is stated by Jesse G. Delia, "Constructivism and the Study of Human Communication," Quarterly Journal of Speech (1977), 66-83.

[30]Ibid., p. 70.

[31]Ibid., p. 70.

[32]Walter H. Crockett, "Cognitive Complexity and Impression Formation," in Progress in Experimental Personality Research, Brenden A. Maher, ed., Vol. 2 (New York: Academic Press, 1965), 46-91.

[33]For a detailed discussion of construct permeability, see Kelly, 1955, p. 156.

[34]Kelly, 1963, p. 57.

[35]Heinz Werner, "The Concept of Development from a Comparative and Organismic Point of View," in D. B. Harris, ed.,

The Concept of Development (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), 125-148.

[36]Kelly, 1963, pp. 64-66.

Table 1

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES FROM REPRESENTATIVE TEXTS

| | Clevenger (1966) | Cronkhite (1978) | Verderber (1974) | Emmert & Donaghy (1981) | Jabusch & Littlejohn (1981) | Colburn & Weinberg (1981) | Nelson & Pearson (1981) | Ehninger & Et al. (1982) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audience Size | X* | | | | | | | X |
| Age | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Sex | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Socio-Econmic -Income | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Geographical Locality-Residence | X | | X | | X | | X | |
| Occupation | X | | X | | X | X | | |
| Marital Status | X | | | | | | | |
| Size of Household | X | | | | | | | |
| Political Party Preference | X | | | | | X | | |
| Education | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Religious Preference | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Group Membership | | | X | | | | X | X |
| Lifestyle | | | | | X | | | |
| Race-Nationality Culture | | X | X | | | X | X | |
| Avocational Interests | | | | | | X | | |

*Indicates appearance of variable in discussion of audience analysis.

Table 1 (Continued)

DISPOSITIONAL PROPERTIES FROM REPRESENTATIVE TEXTS

| | Cronkhite (1966) | Cronkhite (1969) | Cronkhite (1978) | Verderber (1979) | Emmert & Donaghy (1981) | Jabusch & Littlejohn (1981) | Nelson & Pearson (1981) | Ehninger & Et al. (1982) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personality Traits | | X* | | | | | | |
| Age | X | | | | | X | X | X |
| Sex | X | X | | | | X | X | X |
| Intelligence | | X | | X | | | X | |
| Prior Needs Values | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Prior Attitudes & Beliefs | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Structural** Message Choices for Speaker | X | X | | X | | X | X | X |
| Context of** Speech Occasion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

*Indicates appearance of property in discussion of audience analysis.

**Indicates appearance in discussion of audience analysis; however, is not clearly a dispositional property or demographic variable.